

Margaret Broadbent



**Pelletier (right): Hall of Fame Wrestler.**

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**L**TC Romey Pelletier of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations at Fifth U.S. Army, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, played basketball in junior high school, only to realize that he wasn't tall enough for the sport and never would be.

But that didn't diminish his passion for sports. And with encouragement from his older brothers, Pelletier gave wrestling a try.

When he started wrestling, at age 14, for Fort Kent Community High School in Kent, Maine, he never imagined it would lead to an outstanding wrestling career and his eventual induction into the Maine Amateur Wrestling Alliance Hall of Fame.

In 1973, while a member of Fort Kent's varsity wrestling team, Pelletier won the Northwestern Regional Championship and was runner-up in the Maine State Wrestling Championships. Pelletier attended the University of Maine-Presque Isle from 1973 to 1977, where he was voted Outstanding Wrestler in 1977. He was inducted into the university's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1990.

Pelletier enlisted in 1978 and accepted the job of assistant wrestling coach and instructor at West Point. At the end of the collegiate season, he earned a spot on the All-Army Team. Commissioned in 1981, he worked for the Office of the Directorate for Intercollegiate Athletics until 1984.

Pelletier won a gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling at the Interservice Championships and a first place finish in the final Olympic trials held in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1984. He was an Olympic Games alternate on the Greco-Roman team that competed that year in Los Angeles. Pelletier then attended Army flight school and became an aviator.

Though he no longer competes individually, Pelletier coaches the San Antonio Wrestling Club.

"My focus is not just on teaching wrestling technique," said Pelletier. "It is also on helping develop character, sportsmanship, determination and confidence." — *Margaret Broadbent, Fifth U.S. Army Public Affairs Office*

**T**WO Walter Reed Army Medical Center doctors are mapping new directions for treating patients with advanced Parkinson's disease. The disease affects as many as 1.5 million Americans, according to National Parkinson's Foundation estimates. Symptoms include a shaking of the limbs; stiffness in limbs and joints; slow, deliberate movements; and poor balance and lack of coordination.

**LTC Kevin Cannard**, chief of the neurology department's Movement Disorders Unit, and neurosurgeon Air Force **Maj. Kevah Khajavi** teamed up 18 months ago to use deep-brain stimulation surgery to treat advanced Parkinson's patients. They are the only Department of Defense physicians, and the only team in the national capital area, providing the treatment.

Doctors have long treated Parkinson's patients with medications. However, the medicines can treat only some of the symptoms and become less effective as the disease progresses.

Previous surgical procedures used to treat the symptoms destroyed portions of the brain in order to be effective.

Cannard and Khajavi said deep-brain stimulation doesn't destroy brain sectors. With deep-brain stimulation, a thin insulated wire is permanently positioned deep in the brain and is attached to a pulse generator implanted under the skin near the collarbone. Once in place, the system uses short electrical charges to interrupt incorrect messages the brain is sending, much like jamming an unwanted radio signal.

These interruptions relieve the symptoms of Parkinson's and allow patients more freedom to live normal lives.

In 1998 SFC David Gabb received the first deep-brain implant done at Walter Reed.

"It's remarkable," said the 53-year-old deployment specialist. "When the machine is turned off my hand shakes out of control. As soon as it is turned on again, the shaking quickly stops. It has allowed me to keep working."

Though it is not a cure, Cannard believes the pro-

**Khajavi: Researching treatment of Parkinson's Disease.**



cedure is the best tool doctors have to improve a Parkinson's patient's quality of life. — *Beau Whittington, Stripe Assistant Editor, WRAMC*

**CPT Casey Chamberlain** rocked the boat in the 1980s when she petitioned school officials to allow her to play football at her high school. That was before the era of equal opportunity for female athletes.

"When I tried to go out for the high school team, the coach told me the team's equipment didn't include the right type of padding for girls," Chamberlain said.

Her requests were denied, but she never forfeited her dream to play football. Today, the 2nd Brigade, 85th Division, soldier, at Fort McCoy, Wis., is the starting fullback for the Lake Michigan Minx, one of two charter teams of the Women's Professional Football League. The league was featured recently on "CBS Sunday Morning" and in the November 1999 issue of ESPN Magazine.

WPFL's first year, 1999, saw only two teams in the league, the Minx and the Minnesota Vixens. This season, league officials expect six or more teams to join. — *2nd Bde., 85th Div. PAO*

**SFC Ruben L. Banda**, a 29-year Texas Army National Guard veteran with 22 years of active-duty time in the Active-Guard-Reserve, has had plenty of time to reflect on his life.

He commutes 180 miles, roundtrip, daily from his home in Austin to his duty station in Waco.

Gradually, an idea he toyed with decades ago — to become a musician — grew so intense that he decided to do something about it. When he retires this year as the supply sergeant for 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry, he will become a musician, he said.

Four years ago he purchased a second-hand trumpet, an instrument he hadn't played since sixth grade.

"I really loved playing music," said Banda. "The school band leader wanted me to march up and down football fields, but all I wanted to do was play Tejano music." Native to northern Mexico and southern Texas,



**Chamberlain: Starting fullback.**

Tejano has a very savory, upbeat, Old World sound that helped make pop star Selena famous and contributed to the surge in popularity of Latin music.

At 16 Banda followed his uncle's path by sitting in with professional bands in the Austin area. It was not unusual for Banda to perform for hundreds of Tejano music fans on any given weekend.

Then Banda joined the National Guard.

"On my first drill back from boot camp, I told my first sergeant that I had to leave early to go play a gig, and that I'd catch him later."

The gig, of course, went on without Banda and his trumpet.

"I chose the Guard, so I gave up my music," he said. "I had a family to care for, so that was the beginning of my new career. I sold my trumpet, along with my dream to become a professional musician."

Four years ago Banda began practicing again. At first, he performed for school groups, graduation parties and weddings. After gaining confidence, he joined several local mariachi bands.

He recently organized his own band and performs several times a week, mostly on weekends, and he and his band recently cut a demonstration compact disc and hope to draw record-company interest.

He now envisions taking his music to the high seas. "I hope to play Tejano and mariachi melodies aboard cruise ships while seeing the world," he said. —

*SFC Brenda B e n n e r ,  
100th Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment*

*Chamberlain is the starting fullback for one of two charter teams of the Women's Professional Football League.*



**Banda: Rekindling a musical career.**